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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1354
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1213
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON 0189
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 0525
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRETORIA 003875

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DEPT FOR AF/S S. HILL

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TAGS: PREL KDEM ZI SF
SUBJECT: MDC'S BENNETT UPBEAT ON PARTY, ZIMBABWE ELECTIONS

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Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Donald Teitelbaum. Reasons 1.4(
d).

¶1. (C/NF) SUMMARY. Despite harsh criticisms in the media,
Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) President Morgan
Tsvangirai is doing the right thing by cleaning out the party

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leadership, according to MDC Treasurer Roy Bennett. Bennett
hinted that recently-deposed women's leader Lucia Matibenga
is on the payroll of ZANU-PF, and that National Organizing
Secretary Elias Mudzuri and Deputy Secretary General Tapiwa

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Mashakada are "compromised." Bennett believes exiled
Zimbabwean publisher Trevor Ncube is orchestrating the press
attacks on Tsvangirai and the MDC through the newspapers he
owns. He is confident the MDC will win the 2008 elections,
even if the atmosphere is not "totally free and fair" because
of the dire economic situation and ZANU-PF divisions.
Bennett is putting together a campaign strategy focused on
extending the MDC's transportation and communications
infrastructure into "all corners" of the country. He
believes he will be able to raise the necessary funds for the
campaign, estimated at USD 10 million. END SUMMARY.

Tsvangirai Finally Showing Leadership

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¶2. (C/NF) In a November 2 meeting with PolOff at the Movement
for Democratic Change (MDC) offices in Johannesburg, MDC
Treasurer Roy Bennett (strictly protect) said he was "over
the moon" with MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai's leadership
in recent weeks. After years of inaction, Tsvangirai was
finally "cleaning house." Tsvangirai made the right decision
in replacing Lucia Matibenga as head of the MDC Women's
Assembly Congress, Bennett said, hinting strongly that
Matibenga was on the payroll of ZANU-PF. Bennett alleged

that current MDC National Organizing Secretary Elias Mudzuri and Deputy Secretary General Tapiwa Mashakada were also "compromised" and would soon be replaced.

¶3. (C) Bennett also reported that the MDC is finally putting systems in place to manage people and resources properly. He credited George Sibetshiwe, who is serving as Tsvangirai's de facto chief of staff, for organizing Harvest House and allowing Tsvangirai to focus on his key tasks. (NOTE: Sibetshiwe formerly worked for Bennett at the MDC South Africa office. END NOTE.) Bennett has also put a new security team around Tsvangirai, which is trained and "professional."

¶4. (C) The recent press attacks on Tsvangirai claiming that he is dictatorial and disorganized are largely coming from the Trevor Ncube-owned newspapers The Standard and The Independent, Bennett said. Ncube is even using the South African weekly, the Mail & Guardian, which he owns to publish "lies" about Tsvangirai and the MDC. Bennett claimed that Ncube has a personal vendetta against Tsvangirai, and is working with former GOZ Information Minister Jonathan Moyo in his campaign.

SADC Facilitation

¶5. (C) The South African-sponsored talks between the MDC and ZANU-PF are going well, Bennett said. The talks resumed in South Africa October 30, but were put on hold due to the QSouth Africa October 30, but were put on hold due to the death of the son of Minister of Justice Patrick Chinamasa. Bennett understands that one of the sticking points in the talks is the text of the amendment to the Public Order and Security Act (POSA). Initially skeptical of the SADC facilitation, Bennett believes South African President Mbeki is "genuine," and the talks represent the best hope for free and fair elections. ZANU-PF does not want the talks to succeed, so will try to goad the MDC into pulling out. The MDC understands the ZANU-PF strategy and will not fall into their trap. Bennett said that MDC President Tsvangirai recently sent a private letter to SADC, expressing concern about the continuing violence against MDC supporters around

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the country.

Election Plan

¶6. (C) Bennett is optimistic that the MDC will win elections in 2008, even if the environment is "not completely free and fair." He claimed that the MDC has never been stronger, that ZANU-PF is sharply divided, and that the ZANU-PF "rigging machinery" is weaker than in past elections. As party Treasurer, Bennett is putting together a plan to build the party infrastructure in "every corner" of the country. He wants to purchase MDC vehicles for each district, as well as motorcycles and bicycles to reach every polling station. The party would set up a national command center for the elections, as well as provincial and district centers to monitor closely the pre-election environment and conduct a parallel vote count on election day. Bennett wants to use satellite phones and VHS radios to communicate quickly and safely between the MDC offices.

¶7. (C/NF) Bennett believes he will "probably" be able to raise sufficient funds for his election strategy. Bennett said he has not yet "costed out" the entire plan, but estimated that USD 10 million would be sufficient. During Tsvangirai's and Bennett's recent trip to the United States,

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several potential donors expressed interest in supporting the

party (NFI). Tsvangirai also met with actress Angelina
Jolie, former Clinton administration official James Harmon,
and the rock band Dispatch. Bennett is also in touch with
Zimbabwean businessmen living in South Africa (NFI), who are
interested in providing funding to the MDC, but want to see a
concrete spending plan.
BOST